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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the author reports a study that attempted to determine who actually performs specific school business administration tasks in school districts of less than 5,000-pupil enrollments. Questionnaires were sent to 2,500, randomly selected, "small" districts (out of a total of 15,686 such districts.) Study findings revealed that, consistent with the fact that less than one-third of the districts with fewer than 5,000 pupil enrollments employ school business administrators, the superintendent of schools is responsible for and performs the school business administration tasks in from 70 to 80 percent of the districts. (JF)

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SCHOOL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION RESPONSIBILITIES IN SMALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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(A presentation at the annual meeting of the International Association of School Business Officials, Chicago, Illinois, October 25, 1972.)

The official statement of purpose of the International Association of School Business Officials is "a non-profit educational organization dedicated to researching, determining, and publicizing better methods of school business administration." Guided by this statement of purpose, the ASBO Small School District Research Committee conducted a study over the past year to determine current responsibility for school business administration tasks in school districts under 5,000 pupil enrollment throughout the United States. This presentation provides a general overview of the research study and highlights pertinent findings for information and discussion. It is anticipated that a full report of the study will be published and disseminated to all ASBO members in the near future.

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The ASBO Small School Districts Research Committee began discussion on a research topic at the annual meeting in Montreal, Quebec, Canada in October, 1971. It was noted that whereas much writing and discussion occurs concerning duties, responsibilities, and practices of school business administrators within the association, and whereas this representation in general comes from "larger" school districts, a large void existed in the storehouse of knowledge on school business administration in small school

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districts. In particular, it was assumed that school business administration tasks were the responsibility of the school business administrator in districts having such a position in their administrative structure. However, it also was assumed that wide disparity of practice existed in those districts not employing a full-time school business administrator, primarily the "smaller" school district. With these assumptions, the committee set out to research responsibility for school business administration tasks in small school districts and provide such information to the association in the interest of improving practice and professionalization.

The research study was a questionnaire type study conducted in the spring of 1972. For study purposes, "small school district" was defined as a district under 5,000 pupil enrollment. It was discovered that 15,686 such "small" districts existed in the United States out of 17,498 total districts. A sample size of 2,500 districts was agreed upon and a questionnaire developed to obtain pertinent data. The central staff of ASBO cooperated fully in printing and mailing the questionnaire and the entire project was jointly sponsored by ASBO and AASA.

The 2,500 sample districts were selected on a random basis with due concern for representation from each state (a minimum of ten districts) and consideration for representation from size ranges within the 5,000 enrollment limit. Follow-up letters were sent to ensure as complete a return as possible. Returned questionnaires were edited for completeness and validity checks and tabulations were analyzed by computer for subsequent interpretation. The final analysis was made in August, 1972, and the data presented here are the interpretations of those findings deemed appropriate for information and discussion.

ASBO Bulletin #21, The School Business Administrator, was used as the official association delimitation of the major responsibilities of school business administration and tasks were categorized as such in the research study. The major responsibility areas are:

1. Budgeting and Financial Planning
2. Purchasing and Supply Management
3. Plant Planning and Construction
4. School-Community Relations
5. Personnel Management
6. In-Service Training
7. Operation and Maintenance of Plant
8. Transportation
9. Food Service
10. Accounting and Reporting
11. Data Processing
12. Office Management
13. Grantsmanship
14. Educational Resources Management

Specific questions were developed under each major responsibility category to determine what person in the school system actually performs the tasks described under that category.

In summary and prior to presentation of numerical data findings, this research study attempted to determine who actually performs specific school business administration tasks in school districts under 5,000 pupil enrollment. The following overview highlights pertinent findings and is considered strictly preliminary to the final published ASBO report.

RESEARCH DATA

The following data is categorized according to major headings of the questionnaire. The absolute frequencies and percentages used as descriptive data are relative and are not adjusted for incomplete or missing items. The comments are made to convey the most important finding in each category.

I. General Data

The total number of returns considered usable was 879. All states were represented except Hawaii, which has one large school district, Maryland, and Florida.

II. Enrollment	Number	Percent
0-99	24	2.8
100-299	89	10.1
300-599	156	17.7
600-999	141	16.0
1,000-1,499	133	15.1
1,500-2,499	176	20.0
2,500-3,499	94	10.7
3,500-4,999	56	6.4

III. Type of District

Respondents placed 80.0 percent of the sample districts in a "Rural" category, with 7.2 percent considered as "City Districts" (district boundaries coterminous with city boundaries), and 8.8 percent classified as suburban districts in a metropolitan area.

IV. Population	Number	Percent
10,000 - 50,000	153	17.4 percent
2,500 - 9,999	325	37.0 percent
Under - 2,500	289	32.9 percent

V. Grade Organization	Number	Percent
K (1) - 12	689	78.4 percent
9 - 12	28	3.2 percent
K - 8	112	12.7 percent
Other	95	10.8 percent

VI. Operating Budget

Budgets in the sampled districts ranged from less than $50,000 to nearly $10,000,000, with 202 districts in the 1-2 million bracket, 106 in the $400,000-$599,999 bracket, and 110 in the $200,000 to $399,999 bracket.

VII. Employs a School Business Administrator

Less than one-third (28.7 percent) of the responding districts employed a full or part-time school business administrator.

VIII. Employees in Task Areas

Transportation: A majority of the responding districts employed one person in this area.

Financial: Over one-half of the responding districts employed one person to handle finances, with approximately one-fourth employing two persons, and the remainder having three or more employees.

Buildings and Grounds: The vast majority of the districts employed one person in this area.

Food Service: The majority of districts responding to this item employed one person.

TASK AREAS

IX. Budgeting and Financial Planning

This task area included responsibility for budget, long-term fiscal planning, taxation expertise, and new sources of revenue. In all four aspects, the superintendent was responsible in 80 to 90 percent of the districts. The school business administrator was responsible for budget and taxation tasks in 11 percent of the districts and in less than 10 percent for the long-term planning and new revenue sources area. Only the superintendent and school business administrator were

cited as responsible to any significant degree in this area of budgeting and finance.

X. Purchasing and Supply Management

In approximately two-thirds of the districts, the superintendent retained this responsibility. School business administrators were responsible in about one-fifth of the districts, and the remaining districts named various titles as responsible.

XI. Plant Planning and Construction

The superintendent was responsible for and performed tasks of plant planning and construction in about 89 percent of the reporting districts. The school business administrator was named in 4 percent of the districts and the board secretary in 1 percent, particularly in the area of architectural contacts.

XII. School Community Relations

Approximately one-half of the districts reporting indicated that a planned school community relations program existed. In these districts the superintendents prepared informative data and made personal appearances 90 percent of the time. In about 30 percent of the districts the actual preparation of pamphlets, regulations, and other documents was delegated to various other staff members within the school system.

XIII. Personnel Management

The superintendent handled non-certified personnel management in 75 percent of the districts with the school business administrator responsible about 12 percent of the time.

XIV. In-Service Training

Training school business administration personnel was the superintendent's task in 62 percent of the returns with the school business administrator performing the task in 15 percent of the districts. Other persons were named with frequencies of less than 1 percent and many districts assigned no responsibility in this area.

XV. Operation and Maintenance of Plant

This supervisory task was performed by the superintendent 57 percent of the time with the school business administrator supervising in 15 percent of the districts. Eighteen percent of the districts named a head custodian or similar title as responsible.

XVI. Transportation

The percent of districts owning their own bus fleet was 72 percent with 28 percent contracting for bus services. Supervision of the bus operation and maintenance was performed by the superintendent at a 48 percent frequency; the school business administrator, 13 percent; and a head bus driver or similarly named employee 39 percent of the time in districts with owned bus fleets. Bus scheduling and route determination was performed by the superintendent 53 percent; school business administrator, 12 percent; and a head bus driver 16 percent; and other designated persons 19 percent of the cases reported.

XVII. Food Services

Although the superintendent performed general responsibility tasks for food service operation in 47 percent of the districts,

one-third of the districts assigned this responsibility to a head cook or similarly titled employee. The school business administrator supervised food services in about 12 percent of the districts.

XVIII. Accounting and Reporting

Preparing financial reports for the school board meetings was performed at frequencies of 31 percent for the superintendent; 16 percent for the school business administrator; 18 percent for the board secretary; 16 percent for the bookkeeper; 16 percent for the combination secretary-bookkeeper; and less than 1 percent by other staff members. Financial and other reports to the state department were made by the superintendent 52 percent; school business administrator 16 percent; board secretary 12 percent; bookkeeper 9 percent; secretary-bookkeeper 8 percent; and a teacher or other staff member in less than 1 percent of the districts.

XIX. Data Processing

Only 28 percent of the sample districts used any form of data processing in their school's operation. In these districts the superintendent and school business administrator assumed responsibility at frequencies of 34 and 29 percent respectively. Hired data processing personnel were responsible in 13 percent of the districts, with bookkeepers or secretaries responsible in 19 percent of the districts.

XX. Office Management

Office management was performed by the superintendent in approximately 66 percent of the districts; the school business

administrator 20 percent; a secretary or bookkeeper 6 percent; the board secretary 5 percent; and miscellaneous other persons less than 1 percent.

XXI. Grantsmanship

The proposal writing tasks were primarily the responsibility of the superintendent 65 percent with the school business administrator responsible in 10 percent of the districts; and miscellaneous teachers or hired professionals performing the task in the remaining districts.

XXII. Educational Resources Management

In the area of negotiations the chief financial resource person was the superintendent 80 percent; school business administrator - 12 percent; board secretary - 2 percent; and others - 6 percent. Only 22 percent of the districts reported using any system analysis, such as PPBS, etc., and in those districts the superintendent assumed responsibility in 80 percent of the cases and the school business administrator 19 percent.

SUMMARY

The above presented comments and data provide a general overview of the school business administration task areas investigated and the frequency of performance of such tasks by selected persons within the school system. Consistent with the fact that less than one-third of the districts under 5,000 pupil enrollment employ a school business administrator, the superintendent of schools is responsible for and performs the school business administration tasks in 70 to 80 percent of the districts.

Recognizing that actual clerical and manual tasks often would be assigned to various school staff members, it still remains significant that school business administration positions are not existent in the small district. The superintendent continues to perform these tasks with the help of full and part-time bookkeepers, secretaries, teachers, and other specially hired persons.

Many other cross-variables have been tabulated to determine performance of school business administration tasks by person, size of district, type of district, and other demographic and geographic data. These findings will be tabulated and interpreted in the final published ASBO report. It is sincerely hoped that this research effort will be of value to the association as it strives for improved performance of school business administration tasks throughout the nation.